

# access video<sup>news</sup>

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# a silly and mischievous document

A REPORT TO THE MINISTER FOR THE MEDIA  
BY THE WORKING PARTY ON PUBLIC BROADCASTING. AGPS. 1975

The report of the Working Party on Public Broadcasting is a silly and mischievous document that attempts to justify existing ad hoc policies and a continuation of ad hococracy. It is a silly document because it is a naive response to the complexities involved in democratising radio. It is a mischievous document because it attempts to justify its recommendations by rationalisations purporting to be rationales.

The rationalisations for public broadcasting are presented as a series of throw away lines:

*"the limitations of two existing sectors" (p3)*

*"widespread demand for new types of services" (p3)*

*"radio should be as diverse and as well geared as possible to cater for an increasingly diverse Australian society" (p3)*

*"With the great expansion of frequency space, greatly reducing technical limitations, it is clearly undemocratic to deny the expansion of broadcasting" (p5)*

*"it is a significant opportunity to extend the freedom of the individual, foster local independence and cultural enrichment" (p5)*

*"if the community demand and initiative are there, then new services will be tried" (p5)*

*"the leadership is there, the channels are there, there is at least some evidence of community support, there is some evidence of community dissatisfaction with the existing services, so there is no reason to deny the development of public broadcasting" (p6)*

## EXPERIMENTAL:

The report recommends a continuation of the "experimental phase" of public broadcasting (p86). No attempt, however, is made to define the nature of the experimental phase except by implication—the establishment of public broadcasting stations during a period of years is called an experimental phase. There is a suggestion that experimental licences be given for long enough "to give experimental licencees time to adequately demonstrate the range of services they can provide, and the problems which will be encountered" (p86)

## ACCOUNTABILITY:

There is recognition that accountability is an issue, but no recognition of how this would apply to public broadcasting stations and how they should be accountable to the listeners.

Definitions and opinions on what constitutes an experiment differ but I would have thought they include a statement of objectives, a proposed method of achieving those objectives, a criteria to measure the attainment of those objectives and an evaluation group to do the measuring.

## FUNDING:

On funding, "It is strongly recommended that Government funding be provided during the experimental period, if it is to be government policy ultimately to provide it. If it is not provided, under the conditions recommended elsewhere in this report, then the experimental period would not be a fair test of public broadcasting. If for any reason it is necessary to proceed without such funding it should be publicly recognised that it is a limitation which may adversely affect the outcome of the experimental period." (p29)

There is recognition, then, that funding is important but no attempt to relate funding to objectives and no attempt to examine the advantages and disadvantages of different levels of funding.

In essence, the report is a pragmatic document that seeks to justify predetermined assumptions and policies. The report clearly indicates there is a difference between those concerned with the establishment of public broadcasting stations and those concerned with the democratisation of radio. The first is concerned with the acquisition and transfer of power. The second is concerned with the nature and transformation of power.

Despite the rhetoric, the report is solely concerned with establishing a system of public broadcasting without consideration of whether or not the objectives for public broadcasting are viable and realizable, and without defining those objectives, and without relating those objectives to their proposals.

David Griffiths



## prison radio

*NOSTALGIC WIRELESS PRODUCTIONS is a small group of people interested in music and broadcasting who produce specialized requested programs for the listeners of the Victorian Prison Radio Network. The main stations in Pentridge broadcast by landline to headsets in the cells. They provide record tapes, commercial and national radio stations, and T.V. audio which are amplified from the radio station to the various cells and divisions.*

*Nostalgic Wireless Productions provides an alternative form of requested music not heard on Melbourne's normal stations – American and Australian Country and Western, comedy records and 50's–60's rock hits.*

*We collect records from the community, make one hour tapes, and then send the records and tapes to the prisons. Access Video, Carlton, has helped us with recording sessions and technical advice. Anyone interested in more information contact – Brian Poke, 518 Canning St., North Carlton, 3054.*

